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ABSTRACT

A profile of Rochester, New York, Public School District's educational reform efforts from 1987 to 1990 is offered in this case study. Following an overview of the city and its public schools, the impetus for educational reform is discussed, with attention given to the roles of the superintendent, teachers' union president, and school board. Precursors to reform are described next, specifically, the 1986 report "A Call to Action," by the Urban League of Rochester, and the 1987 collective bargaining agreement between teachers and the school district. The 1987 contract established higher teacher salaries and set forth outlines for reforms, such as the Career in Teaching Program and school-based planning. Subsequent sections describe initial reactions to reform and the role of the business community. The extensive negotiation process for the second contract from 1990 to 1992 is highlighted next, and the paper concludes with some observations about coping with the challenge of rising expectations and the changing shape of labor relations in Rochester. (92 endnotes) (LMI)

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THE ROCKY ROAD TO REFORM IN ROCHESTER[1]

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Before 1987, Rochester, New York, a medium-sized industrial city on the south shore of Lake Ontario, rarely made the nightly news or national headlines. All that changed in 1987 when Rochester City Schools and the Rochester Teachers Association (RTA) signed a pathbreaking collective bargaining agreement, the centerpiece of which was a series of bold education reform programs.

Rochester now received a flood of local publicity and nationwide attention. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers and a leading proponent of school reform, hailed Rochester as the "educational flagship of the United States."[2] School reform in Rochester was featured prominently in publications such as the New York Times, US News and World Report, Kappan, and Education Week.

Between 1987 and 1990, Rochester's school reform efforts and the new labor-management configuration nested within them, were held up to the light of public scrutiny. Educators, politicians, business and civic leaders, and concerned citizens watched as the new union-district partnership in Rochester launched an armada of education reforms. Innovations included a teacher career ladder, called the Career in Teaching Program; Home Base Guidance, designed

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to give each middle school student a caring "home base" teacher; and School-Based Planning, Rochester's version of site-based decisionmaking. Key to Rochester's reform efforts was the strong, collegial relationship that had been forged between the president of the teachers union and the district's superintendent.

By fall 1991, however, the word on the education street was that reform in Rochester was unraveling. Attempts to achieve a successor collective bargaining agreement had met with shattering resistance.

First, teachers rejected a contract recommended to them by their union leadership. Back to the bargaining table went union and district officials. Another tentative agreement was reached. Teachers ratified this accord by 97 percent, but the school board unanimously turned thumbs down.

Finally, in May 1991, nearly a year after the expiration of the previous contract, teachers and the district approved a new pact. But the national rumor mill said that reform in Rochester was no more. School change efforts and union-management harmony in Rochester would soon be a thing of the recent, and forgettable, past.

Mark Twain, reading his own obituary in a local newspaper, wisecracked, "Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." Likewise, reports of the death of reform and of cooperation between the union and district in Rochester have also been greatly exaggerated.

This case study is a profile of one school district's dive into the national mainstream of education reform. Rochester plunged in, came up gasping, went down again, and seems not to have drowned.

In fact, Rochester may be learning to swim in the new currents that are changing relations between labor and management.

Yet longterm prospects for institutional reform in Rochester public schools remain uncertain. Public expectations for rapid reform and unresolved issues of leadership and support continue to dog education change efforts.

Setting the Scene—Greater Rochester

Rochester's 245,140 citizens reflect the multicultural complexion of the nation's cities. Slightly more than two-thirds of the city's residents (69 percent) are white, one-quarter (25 percent) are black, and 5 percent are Hispanic. They inhabit an area whose proximity to several waterways, including Lake Ontario, the Genesee River, and the Erie Canal, has made possible the development and support of a solid base of industry and commerce.

Rochester began as a village, Rochesterville. The first settlers were attracted to the area by the industrial potential of the waterfalls on the Genesee River. By 1825, Rochester had become the leading milling center in the United States.

As pioneers pushed westward to the plains states, Rochester lost its title of "Flour City," and became instead the "Flower City." Nurseries flourished and a thriving seed catalog business developed. Homes, some quite spectacular, were built along Rochester's waterways. Some of these homes became stops on the underground railroad, providing slaves with safe passage en route to freedom in Canada.

By the 1860s, the iron railroad had also spread throughout the area. Industries began to take the place of nurseries. Factories replaced flowers, ushering in the rise of three of Rochester's most prominent corporate fixtures, Bausch and Lomb, Eastman Kodak, and Xerox.

In 1855, Rochester residents John Jacob Bausch and Henry Lomb developed a new method of grinding lenses for eyeglasses. With this development, they built a business. Today Bausch and Lomb, still headquartered in Rochester, is one of the nation's leading producers of contact lenses, opthalmic products, and telescopes.

In the early 1880s, a young bank clerk named George Eastman dreamed of making his hobby into a career. At the time, photography was solely a scientific endeavor. Eastman wanted to make cameras accessible to everyone. He left Rochester Savings Bank to start his own company, Kodak, which made its first camera in 1888. (*Kodak* has no meaning. Eastman just liked the sound of the word.) The Eastman Kodak Company still is based in Rochester.

And finally, in 1938, inventor Chester Carlson developed a process called *xerography*, which he believed would revolutionize the way Americans did business. He took his idea to the IBM, RCA, General Electric, and Remington Rand corporations, but they all rejected it. Finally, a small Rochester company, the Haloid Corporation, embraced Carlson's invention and changed its company name to Xerox. Today, Rochester remains Xerox's worldwide corporate headquarters.

Rochester also prides itself on being an education and cultural center. The University of Rochester, with four campuses housing

eight undergraduate and graduate divisions, and more than 150 degree programs, anchors the academic community. The greater Rochester area boasts water sports, music, and the annual Lilac Festival.

All, however, is not picture-postcard or tourist-bureau perfect. Rochester is a struggling, largely minority inner city surrounded by a more prosperous suburban metropolitan area. The complex constellation of child-related social issues that have become disturbingly ubiquitous on the nation's urban landscape are much in evidence in Rochester.

Over the last decade, the number of preschool children in families on public assistance in Rochester has doubled. In 1990, more than 10,000 Rochester children received assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Fifty-three percent of entering kindergarteners test so far below the norm they require immediate, and often intense, remedial services. More than 1,100 babies are born annually to Rochester adolescents. One in four fifteen-year-olds in Rochester gives birth to at least one child before reaching the age of twenty. And Rochester's business community laments students who emerge from the area's schools ill-equipped for productive employment.

Rochester City Schools

Rochester City Schools is the third largest school district in New York state, after New York City and Buffalo. A unified district that enrolled 32,700 students in 1990–91, Rochester offers a range of kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade programs. The district operates

three preschools and two early childhood education centers, thirty-four K–5/K–6 schools, four comprehensive middle schools, and three comprehensive high schools. Rochester also maintains seven "magnet" programs at the middle school level and ten at the high school level, as well as three alternative schools. All high schools operate as "schools of choice."

Student enrollment in Rochester declined slightly between 1985 and 1989, but by 1990, had begun to inch slowly upward again. The percentage of white students enrolled in Rochester public schools, however, has declined steadily in the last fifteen years. There is an inverse relationship between the student population and the municipality. While 75 percent of Rochester's residents are white, nearly 75 percent of Rochester students (71.9%) are minority. More than half of the students (54.7%) are black, and nearly one-seventh (14.4%) are Hispanic.

Poverty resounds a constant theme in Rochester's public schools. Nearly three-quarters of the school district's students (73%) come from low-income families. Nearly half (41%) live in single-parent, often female-headed households—the family configuration most at risk for poverty.[3]

Five percent of the district's K–12 students speak a language other than English at home. Ten percent of the district's students are identified as physically or mentally handicapped. Educating these students effectively is both complex and expensive.

Rochester is one of a handful of cities in the United States participating in the New Futures Initiative. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, New Futures represents an effort to design

systems that use the school as the "hub" of coordinated social services for children. The goal of New Futures is to increase the availability and accessibility of a range of needed social services, such as health, mental health and counseling, for children and families by locating these services at or near the school site. New Futures, however, is not yet much in evidence in Rochester City Schools.

The school district employs 500 administrators, 2,600 teachers, and 2,200 classified staff. Rochester's 5 to 1 ratio of teachers to administrators makes the district rather "top-heavy," and is a source of tension between the teachers union and district officials.

More than 75 percent of Rochester's public school teachers are white. The majority of these education professionals live in the suburbs outside Rochester, a fact not lost on Rochester's minority resident community.

Like many school districts throughout the nation, Rochester is coping with declining revenues. Of the total district budget—$234 million in 1990–91—54 percent comes from the state.

Until 1991, the district benefited from double-digit state-level increases for education. When New York State began to feel the effects of the nation's economic recession, Rochester felt the results in the form of smaller state allotments to the school district. In 1991, New York's Governor Mario Cuomo reduced the state's education budget by $900 million. Rochester lost $18 million in state aid. The district lost an additional $2.3 million in federal magnet school money.

While Rochester locals understandably are concerned about declining fiscal resources, however, education revenues and expenditures are relative. Rochester's per-pupil expenditure in 1990–91 was $7,226, more than 30 percent higher than national average per-pupil expenditures that year of $4,896.

The school district is fiscally dependent on Rochester's city government. The board of education must submit the district budget to the city council for approval at the same time as the mayor presents the city's budget to the council. City officials have authority to change the district's revenue allocations. However, a predetermined revenue allocation formula was developed in 1972 and subsequently modified in 1985 and again in 1990. As long as the schools' budget remains within these set "boundaries," the city is unlikely to tamper with the district's revenue allocations.

A 1985 county sales tax revenue-sharing plan gave the city of Rochester a larger portion of the tax income than the surrounding Rochester communities in Monroe County. However, the effect of this windfall is likely to be blunted by a new statute that shifts a greater tax burden from the corporate community to individual taxpayers. At the beginning of the 1991–92 fiscal year, the superintendent and school board faced the prospect of needing to seek a 13 percent tax hike from Rochester citizens.

The Impetus for Reform

Beginning in 1985, Rochester City Schools took stock of its students' academic achievement. The district did not like what it saw. More than one-quarter (28.5%) of the students left the school

system before the twelfth grade. Nearly half (42%) of seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-graders were failing at least one core subject. Of children entering kindergarten, 80 percent were one year or more behind the developmental norm. One in five students in grades 7 through 12 was suspended from school for infractions of discipline rules.

By the mid 1980s, the nation's education reform movement was in full swing. The National Commission on Excellence in Education's report, *A Nation at Risk*, had captured headlines and galvanized state-centered action in 1983, warning that a "rising tide of mediocrity"[4] threatened to engulf the nation's schools. The 1985 report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *Teachers for the Twenty-first Century*, offered a new vision of schools and teaching.

Rochester reform efforts were patterned after the Carnegie recommendations. The school district, in concert with Rochester's local teachers union, embarked on an ambitious program of education reform. The major players in this scenario have been the district superintendent and the president of Rochester's teachers union. The school board has also played a vital role.

The Superintendent of Schools

A central figure in Rochester's education reform effort is the superintendent of schools. Selected by the governing board and serving at the board's pleasure, Superintendent, Peter McWalters held that position from 1985 to 1992. (McWalters left Rochester in January 1992 to become chief state school officer in Rhode Island.)

Peter McWalters is young and energetic, and was dedicated to his task. McWalter's philosophy about children and education is exemplified by the mission statement he proposed to the board in 1985: "Ours will be a district marked by strong achievement that is not predictable by a student's circumstances or background." That statement was adopted by the board the following year.

The superintendent's philosophy about reform is expressed in a report he made to a 1990 business-education forum. Said McWalters, "The restructuring of organizations and relationships in an institution like the City School District will not effect the kind or degree of reform we require if it is not accompanied by fundamental cultural change—change in the values, attitudes, and behaviors of those who administer and support our schools and who teach our children. There is a need," said McWalters, "to build a culture of collegial dependency."[5]

McWalters reduces education to the basics. "The only critical moment in the whole institution [school] is the one between the teacher and the kids. The whole system is really a series of investments to get the very best creative, prepared, empowered, authorized energy [in the classroom], and get everything else the hell out of the way."[6]

Peter McWalters describes himself as a "teacher on leave." He first came to Rochester City Schools in 1970. As a classroom teacher, he was active in the Rochester Teachers Association, the local teachers' union. During the 1980 Rochester teachers' strike, McWalters walked a picket line—in front of the district central office.

In the early 1980s, Peter McWalters was placed in charge of the district's budget department by then-superintendent Laval Wilson. Wilson left Rochester in 1985 to take up the reins as superintendent in Boston. McWalters was appointed interim superintendent while a national search was conducted to locate Wilson's permanent successor. But McWalters himself surfaced as the most promising candidate. He was appointed superintendent later that year.

Since leaving teaching for administration, McWalter's professional career has kept him in the district central office. He has never been a building principal, which is a source of considerable consternation to current district administrators. "He doesn't understand what we do because he's never been one of us," they lament.

Peter McWalters describes reform as being about a "new unionism." He describes the goal of his relationship with Rochester Teachers Association president Adam Urbanski as "professionalism through unionism." McWalters believes that in order to change schools, the teachers union must work as a partner with the district from the beginning. "I need the union with me as I go down that road [of reform]," he says, "or I'm going to keep bumping into them every time I want to change something."[7]

McWalters is philosophical but realistic about the challenge of school reform. "I don't believe that I can empty out this system and bring in the 'right' one," he says. "I don't believe that of either teachers or principals. The enemy is us, and somehow we are also the answer. I am still struggling with the basics."[8]

The Teachers Union President

Teachers in Rochester are represented for purposes of collective bargaining by the Rochester Teachers Association (RTA), an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. Ninety percent of Rochester's teachers are RTA members. The union's president, since 1981, has been Adam Urbanski.

A Polish immigrant and former junior/senior high school teacher who earned a doctorate in American social history at the University of Rochester, Adam Urbanski is articulate, quotable, and passionate about his work. A poster from the Polish trade union Solidarity hangs on Urbanski's office wall to serve as a constant reminder that "all things are possible."

Adam Urbanski is a union leader in a nonunion town. As he explains, "Rochester isn't a union town, it's a Kodak town."[9] The tone has been set by nonunion Kodak, the city's largest corporate employer with 40,000 Rochester area residents on its payroll.

Urbanski is not a conventional trade union leader. He unabashedly proclaims that "unions as they used to be [are] a mismatch with the times." In other words, antagonistic adversarial labor-management relations no longer fit modern school needs. He adds, "Change is inevitable. Only growth is optional, and all institutions, including the union, must change or atrophy."[10]

Adam Urbanski sought and won the RTA presidency in 1981. His election followed a troubled year in which the district hired a new superintendent, Laval Wilson, who arrived in Rochester after a stormy tenure in Berkeley, California, and the RTA led teachers out on a nine-day strike.

Urbanski and then-superintendent Wilson became bargaining table adversaries. Wilson's term in Berkeley had been marked by his authoritarian, top-down management style. As one Rochester school district observer remarked, "He didn't change on the flight east."

Wilson was not keen on shared decision-making and particularly was not disposed to involve the union in significant school district decisions. Urbanski was inclined otherwise. The superintendent and union president developed an arms-length professional relationship. Civility was maintained largely because of the union's ability to analyze the district budget and offer convincing arguments about the allocation of resources. Not until Peter McWalters became superintendent, however, did the RTA leader glimpse the possibility of education reform.

"We had a choice," says Urbanski, "between buttressing what *is* versus substituting what *isn't*."[11] He continues, "However one viewed the [pre-reform] circumstances—politically, pragmatically, or educationally—it was clear we needed a change in kind, not just a change in degree. We had reached the point where not taking risks was a greater risk than taking risks."[12] Urbanski gravely jokes, "You'd have to be a lot smarter than McWalters and me to come up with something worse than what we were trying to change."[13]

Adam Urbanski is realistic about the difficulties of fundamentally altering Rochester's education system. He points to three primary obstacles to reform. Money he describes as a "weak third." Second is impatience with the pace of change.

"But the greatest threat [to reform]," he says, "is that deep down inside, teachers, just like the general public, hold suspect any school that doesn't resemble the school they remember. I see teachers who actually have signs on their doors that say, 'Knowledge dispensed. Bring your own container.' This in spite of the fact that we know you cannot 'learn' someone. They have to do the learning."[14]

Adam Urbanski has his share of critics within the union. In 1989, the former RTA president ran against the incumbent Urbanski on an anti-reform platform. The New York Times, anticipating that the challenger would prevail, allegedly prepared Urbanski's political obituary in a scheduled story about the death of education reform in Rochester. But Urbanski was reelected for his fifth term by a 76 percent margin and the Times article never ran.

Adam Urbanski was reelected in May 1991 for his sixth term by a margin of 86 percent. He again defeated an anti-reform challenger. No New York Times story was prepared in advance of the vote count.

The RTA president seems unruffled by union members who do not support his agenda. "It's their union as much as mine,"[15] he says. He acknowledges, however, that there have been some tense, and intense, union meetings, with some members urging a return to the days when "the union was the union."

Yet Adam Urbanski always is eager to try new approaches and is not afraid to take risks. "We're like bumper cars," he says. "They bump into a wall and then turn away in another direction. This is essentially what we are doing. In order to do this [reform], you

cannot be wedded to any position you take."[16] As if to reinforce his point, Urbanski quotes Winston Churchill: "Success is moving from failure to failure with undiminished enthusiasm."

The School Board

Rochester City Schools is governed by a seven-member board, elected to four-year terms in city-wide, partisan elections. Each member receives $15,000 per year as compensation for board service; the board president earns $17,500. Six of the seven are virtually full-time board members. They maintain offices in school district headquarters, and they are there every day. Being a board member is their job.

The current configuration of the board is three black members, three white members, and one Hispanic. The minority members all are male; the three white members are female. There is no white male—the classic "urban elite"—on Rochester's school board.

The majority of current members has served on the board for more than a decade. All are Democrats. Five of the board members were parent activists in the 1970s, one has a background as a community advocate, and one, the newest and youngest board member, is employed in a management capacity at Kodak. Most of the board members have known each other, and worked together, for a number of years.

A 1986 national study of school boards found many local boards afflicted with a common set of problems. These included attachment to narrow special interests, only sporadic interaction with general city and state government, isolation from mainstream community political structures, and continual tension over the "gray

areas" between board policy-making responsibilities and superintendent administrative functions.[17]

Rochester's school board seems not to suffer these ills. The Rochester board members, on balance, are sophisticated, politically astute, reasonably well connected to other sectors of government, and not fixedly bound by special interest concerns. The board members speak in terms of broad-gauge educational goals, student achievement, and equal education opportunity for all students.

However, board votes often split along race or gender lines. (Given the composition of the board, it is difficult to tell which votes may be prompted by race, which by gender.) Board members seem to have formed relatively permanent voting blocks that seem anchored in different perceptions of the role and function of school. The three female board members want schools to nurture and to reach out to students and the community. The three black members strive for a visible, structured curriculum as an open display of what is going on in the schools. The Hispanic member, often the swing vote on the board, carves his position down the middle. "Race is a factor," says longtime board member Archie Curry," but no more now than it was 20 years ago."

Board president Catherine Spoto, whose office sports a sign that reads, "Enjoy life. This is not a dress rehearsal," says, "School boards tend to be defensive and protective of the status quo. But the role of the board should be to provide vision, a framework, establish goals, and engage the community."[18] Her six colleagues are quick to concur.

By nearly any measure, then, this is a "good board." Yet even these likeable well-intentioned board members seem at times unable to move beyond their own rhetoric.

Precursor to Reform

Much of the media attention and education community focus on Rochester resulted from the landmark 1987 contract settlement. One activity in particular laid the groundwork for that contract.

A Call to Action

"There is a crisis in our community. We are failing our young people,"[19] began A Call to Action, a 1986 report issued by the Rochester chapter of the National Urban League. The report likened the "waste of young lives" to a national tragedy, purposely juxtaposing it to the then-recent *Challenger* disaster in which seven U.S. astronauts, including an elementary schoolteacher, had perished.

The report cited a set of problems and displayed a series of statistics designed to paint a stark picture of the situation confronting Rochester's youth. High absentee rates among students at all grade levels, unacceptably high dropout rates, low academic performance, large numbers of suspensions for "unacceptable behavior," compounded by high rates of poverty and limited chances of productive employment, all sketched a bleak future. "These facts," concluded the initial section of the Urban League report, "represent a sad loss of human potential and an appalling waste of community resources."[20]

In A Call to Action, the Urban League urged the Rochester community to take ownership of the problem:

> The problem belongs to all of us: businesses, unions, social service agencies, churches and synagogues, governments at all levels, cultural institutions, our colleges and universities, and the students themselves. All of us share responsibility for the problem, and all of us can contribute to finding solutions. We call this community to action.[21]

A Call to Action actually had its genesis in January 1985, when the Urban League of Rochester, an antipoverty organization focused on social problems in the black community, convened a group of prominent Rochester citizens to consider how the league might celebrate its twentieth anniversary. The Community-wide Initiative to Improve Rochester's Public Schools was the result of these conversations. Two task force reports were principal products of the initiative.

One task force, co-sponsored by the Center for Educational Development (CED), a local clearinghouse for educational support and action, and Rochester's Urban League, issued five principal recommendations to the schools:

- Maintain better contact with homes by giving parents "one dialogue partner—the homeroom teacher"[22]
- Make students more responsible for their own learning
- Develop closer alliances with local social service agencies
- Encourage the professionalization of teaching by establishing career advancement paths within teaching and internship programs for new teachers
- Expand opportunities for pre-kindergarten education.

The second task force, a joint effort of the Industrial Management Council and the Rochester Chamber of Commerce, focused on identifying positive ways in which business could help Rochester's youth. The task force set itself five major tasks "as the most effective responses business can make."[23] These included

- Providing job placement opportunities for students
- Creating opportunities for "broad-scale interaction" among employers, employees, students, and school staffs
- Marketing public education by developing a campaign to "raise the community's awareness about education's key role in developing human potential and about the positive aspects of Rochester's public schools"[24]
- Expanding opportunities for school staffs to enhance their professional skills
- Providing management services consulting to the school district's central administration.

The task force reports were collected into A Call to Action, distributed widely by Rochester's Urban League. Many of the report's recommendations became significant features of Rochester City Schools' reform agenda. Foreshadowed in the Urban League's report, for example, was the Career in Teaching Program and Home Base Guidance. The recommendations of the business task force formed the foundation of what was to become Rochester BrainPower, a prominent business consortium designed to assist the Rochester public schools.

The 1987 Contract

The contract that brought Rochester to media prominence was signed on October 15, 1987. Rochester's school board split, voting by a slim 4–3 majority in favor of the agreement. Teachers overwhelmingly approved the new accord.

The preamble to the contract highlighted shifting labor relations in Rochester and previewed the direction of educational change. The preamble stated, in part:

> The Rochester Teachers Association and the Board of Education recognize that they have a common responsibility beyond their collective bargaining relationship . . . . The Rochester Teachers Association and the Board of Education are now ready to further advance their mutual goals [with] new innovative steps toward fulfilling the educational needs of this school system and the legitimate expectations of the community.[25]

Although the 1987 collective bargaining agreement contained a number of significant features, it was money, specifically teachers' salaries, which cornered the market on publicity and attention. In the first year of the contract, Rochester teachers would receive a $4,500 across-the-board salary increase. By year two of the agreement, half of Rochester's teachers would be earning at least $45,000 per year. Salaries of beginning teachers in Rochester would be $23,483 in 1987, increasing $9,500, to $28,939, by 1989.

In all, Rochester teachers would enjoy a 40 percent salary increase over the life of the three-year contract. The restructured salary schedule provided the possibility for teachers to earn an

annual salary of nearly $70,000. The new accord made Rochester's teachers the highest paid urban instructors in the nation.[26]

Although Rochester's new contract encompassed fifty-five topics on 109 pages, much of the accord was in the form of an "agreement to agree."[27] Nonetheless, the contract also sketched the outlines of the Career in Teaching Program, Home Base Guidance, and School-Based Planning.

The Career in Teaching Program

The Career in Teaching Program restructured the salary schedule and began to reconfigure teachers' professional responsibilities. A four-tier career ladder would take the place of the conventional compensation structure in which teachers advanced in salary on the basis of years of experience and college credits earned. The goal of the program is to make it possible for teachers to assume enhanced professional responsibility and enjoy greater professional discretion without leaving teaching for administration.

- Level 1 of the career ladder is the *intern teacher*. Interns are new to teaching or new to the Rochester school district.
- Level 2 is comprised of *resident teachers*, individuals who have completed an internship, but are not yet permanently certified.
- Level 3 is the *professional teacher*, classroom instructors who are permanently certified and are tenured.
- Level4 is the *lead teacher*.

Lead teachers are professional educators who are selected in a competitive peer process to assume defined instructional leadership roles. These include mentors who assist and support intern teachers, demonstration teachers who offer specialized staff development

services, adjunct instructors who work in cooperation with local college or university teacher preparation programs, and integrated curriculum designers who assist school sites to develop multicultural curriculum.

Lead teachers also serve as specialists in the Intervention component of Rochester's Peer Assistance and Review (PAR). Patterned after the Intern/Intervention program developed in Toledo, Ohio in the early 1980s, Rochester's Intervention program is designed to assist tenured teachers who are having trouble fulfilling their professional responsibilities. A teacher, in this case a lead teacher, develops a program of remediation for a colleague who has been recommended by his or her supervisor for Intervention. The designated lead teacher then assists the teacher-in-trouble in carrying out the remediation program and evaluates the teacher's professional progress. Finally, the lead teacher submits a report and recommendation regarding the teacher's continuing employment status to the Career in Teaching Panel, which forwards its recommendation to the superintendent and RTA president.

Lead teachers are eligible to earn from 5 to 15 percent above their annual salaries as stipends for expanded professional responsibilities. By the 1990–91 school year, 90 Rochester teachers had been selected to occupy the lead teacher category.

The Career in Teaching program is directed by a ten-member panel. Five members of the panel are appointed by the superintendent, and five by the RTA. The chair rotates each year between teachers and administrators. Responsibilities of the CIT panel include delineating roles and responsibilities of each of the

four career levels, selecting lead teachers, and redesigning the performance appraisal system for professional teachers.

School-Based Planning

Another central feature of the 1987 Rochester contract was an agreement "in principle" to develop School-Based Planning, a program to devolve significant educational decisions to the school site. The only reference to this program in the collective bargaining agreement is a single sentence that reads, "The Board and the Superintendent and the Association agree to cooperatively participate in the development of school-based planning at each school location."[28] The specifics of on site planning were developed by a joint union-district committee convened after the contract was ratified.

School-Based Planning is not just a pilot program in Rochester. All schools participate. As one district official explained, "Pilots do not commit the organization."[29]

School-based planning teams first were established in fall 1988. Comprised of teachers (who form the majority of the team), administrators, parents, and (in high schools) students, school-based planning teams are decision-making bodies. By contract, the principal chairs the team.

Team decisions are made by consensus. However, if a team is unable to reach consensus on a particular issue, constituency voting is used. Each constituency (teachers, administrators, and so on) meets in caucus. Then the entire team reassembles and each constituency is allowed a single vote. Consensus—now by constituency voting—is still required for a decision.

School-based planning teams employ a type of collective bargaining at the school site. Each school team negotiates with the district to set targets for student performance and to secure the resources necessary to achieve the school's targets.

The planning process, as outlined in the program's official guidelines, encompasses five stages:

1. *Assessment*—review of district-provided data on school and student performance to establish a baseline
2. *Goal setting*—the school sets student achievement goals consistent with district priorities and school-indentified needs
3. *Implementation*—development of school plans to accomplish agreed-upon goals
4. *Monitoring and evaluation*—assessing the extent to which goals are realized
5. *Accountability*— each school is responsible for presenting its plan and reporting the results to the school community.

School-based planning teams are empowered to decide "Anything that directly or indirectly relates to instruction and student performance."[30] Schools are scheduled to be granted broad budget authority on a phased-in basis.

Teams are encouraged "to request waivers from the policies, procedures, and contractual language that constrain them from accepting greater responsibility for decisions about how best to educate their students."[31] If a school team believes a waiver is required, a request is sent to the district central office. If no contract issue is involved, the area superintendent and central office staff who have specific responsibility in the waiver area are convened as a

review committee. If a waiver of a contract provision is sought, the RTA is represented on the committee.

The burden of proof is on central office to find a compelling reason *not* to approve the waiver, rather than on the school site to justify its request. Program guidelines state, "Central office administrators will be expected to assist school-based planning teams by supporting their requests for waivers and working to remove barriers that impede them from accomplishing their goals."[32]

Time is among the most precious commodities in ventures such as school-based planning. As part of the contract, Rochester teachers' work year in 1990 was extended from 185 days to 190 days (in 1990) to provide additional time for school planning and professional development in connection with the program.

Schools have met with varying degrees of "success" in their efforts to implement school-based planning. At some schools, teachers have been reluctant to assume additional professional responsibilities. In some instances, principals have bridled at what they perceive to be a diminution of their authority.

School-based planning is creating predictable role tensions. Teachers used to establish leadership was by knowing and enforcing the contract. In school-based planning, teachers establish and maintain authority by displaying professional knowledge and expertise.

Administrators used to establish authority by developing rules and regulations. Now, says the superintendent

> I have principals who made it on the structural authority question. Now I'm

> saying, "Sorry, now your authority is your competence, not your position. I am holding you accountable for your capacity to build consensus, to engage [teachers] as peers."[33]

Some principals, says McWalters, have adapted well to the new system. Others have been less cooperative.

The superintendent reserves his greatest frustration for the district central office. Says McWalters, "[School-based planning] means abandoning the long-held ethos that the schools answer to central office, his own realm. Reform means that central office must relate to schools and their planning teams as clients who set agendas for themselves and use central office services to achieve their goals."[34]

But, he says ruefully, "We have a meeting to decentralize and the staff leaves and turns decentralization into a directive. I'm having trouble getting central office to stop acting like central office."[35]

"Success" in implementing site planning was not easily forecast. Says the administrator in charge of the program, "We would have predicted wrongly which schools would be superstars."[36]

One school that falls neatly into the superstar category is School Number 6. School 6's program was underway before school-based planning became a requirement. The school shows how site decisionmaking can function.

School Number Six—The Genesee River Valley Project

School 6 is located in one of the poorest areas of Rochester. Many of the school's students have never ventured beyond their

immediate neighborhood. The Genesee River serves as the area's "local landmark."

The faculty and administration at School 6 have totally restructured the school's instructional program to use "the world as a classroom." The entire K–6 curriculum centers around the Genesee River. The same curriculum is used at each grade level, with increasing levels of difficulty and complexity as students advance through the grades. The river actually serves as the initiating point for an expanded study of history, geography, literature, science, and other academic subjects.

School 6's educational program is based on field study and is historically organized. It employs a thematic approach designed around a set of staff-developed "interesting questions." Students and faculty together explore answers to questions such as "Was there a beginning of the world?" "What is a city?" "Who is in charge of the city?" "Why is the river water brown?" and "How will the river valley look in a hundred years?"

School 6's school-based planning team (School 6 now is officially part of the district's School-Based Planning program) meets once each week to evaluate and prepare for the coming weeks. The staff is entrepreneurial, making use of assistance provided by local colleges and universities and seeking and securing corporate contributions. Test scores at School 6 have shown improvement, but the staff has not been content with this measure of student progress. For the 1990–91 school year, the school-based planning team conducted its own in-house research based on a set of site-specified indicators of student achievement.

Home Base Guidance

An additional feature of the 1987 Rochester collective bargaining agreement is Home Base Guidance. Initiated in fall 1988 in Rochester's middle schools,[37] Home Base Guidance emerged as another "agreement to agree," mentioned briefly in the contract with details to be worked out later.

The program establishes a "home base" for each student, in many ways patterned after an old-fashioned homeroom. Each home base teacher is assigned approximately twenty students, and serves as these students' advisor throughout their middle school careers. The home base teacher "provides a consistent focal point in each student's day."[38] Twenty minutes are set aside each day for home base students and teachers to work together.

Home base teachers meet with students and parents at the beginning of each school year and maintain ongoing communication with the home, monitor cognitive growth and student behavior, serve as a resource to help students solve academic and social problems, refer students for additional services as appropriate, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, and promote attendance.

Gaining teachers' acceptance for Home Base Guidance has been difficult. Although teachers generally agree that students have a range of needs beyond the purely academic that must be met, many teachers are reluctant to assume the responsibilities entailed by helping to meet these needs. The comment frequently heard is, "I'm not a social worker."

Initial Reactions to Reform

Not everyone was pleased with the 1987 contract. Adam Urbanski keeps in his office a homemade greeting card he received from a Rochester teacher shortly after the 1987 accord was ratified. Constructed of faded-green, rough-hewn paper, the front of the card depicts the cover of the teachers' contract. To the inside of the card is taped a screw.

School administrators were neither early nor ardent champions of Rochester-style education reform. Many remain resistant to change.

Administrators are members of a collective bargaining unit that includes central office officials immediately below the rank of the superintendent's cabinet, principals and vice principals, high school department heads, and middle school "cluster coordinators." It is a sizeable unit. As noted earlier, Rochester maintains a ratio of one administrator for every five teachers.

Prior to 1978, both administrators and teachers were members of the Rochester Teachers Association, though they negotiated separate contracts. Administrators broke away from the RTA in 1978 and formed their own organization, the Association of School Administrators of Rochester (ASAR), affiliated with the School Administrators Association of New York State.

Richard Stear, the current president of ASAR, vocally denounces district reform efforts. Stear, the organization's third president, came to office, as he describes it, "just after the Peter [McWalters]-Adam [Urbanski] axis was formed."[39]

He complains that administrators never were invited to be involved in the district's reform efforts in any significant way. He says ASAR "want[ed] to be part of the architectural firm, not just the contractor." Both McWalters and Urbanski say ASAR has repeatedly been invited to the reform table but has consistently refused to come.

In 1988, ASAR filed suit against RTA and the school district, alleging that the peer review program represented "a threat to the very heart of administrative functions."[40] It did—and that was the point, says McWalters. The administrators lost the suit, but did not give up the fight.

The president of ASAR harks back to the "good old days," before 1987 reform initiatives. What was good about them? "Well," says Stear, "everyone knew his role then. Principals [need] to reassert their educational leadership."[41]

ASAR's views have not received a sympathetic hearing from the superintendent. Peter McWalters has made it clear, said one RTA official, that "administrators were going to be on the train or under it."[42] District legal counsel Adam Kaufman pokes fun at Stear and his organization by quoting a line from the film, *Lion in Winter*, "Henry, this is the twelfth century."

The Role of the Business Community

A conspicuous player in Rochester reform efforts has been the local business community. Rochester BrainPower, born as the district's school reform efforts were launched, is a creation of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Management

Council. BrainPower is designed to engage the local business and corporate community in active efforts to improve the city's public schools. Spearheaded initially by Kay Whitmore, president of Kodak, and David Kearns, then chief executive officer of the Xerox Corporation,[43] the BrainPower team has since been joined by managers from Bausch and Lomb, General Motors, and Citibank.

Each year, on a rotating basis, one of the participating companies "loans" an executive to BrainPower to serve as that year's director. These individuals take their jobs seriously. Says Howard Mills, 1990–91 executive director of Rochester BrainPower, "I have never done anything as important in my life as this."[44] These are rather powerful words from a man whose career has included serving as program manager for the *Apollo* lunar landing and as manager of engineering facilities for Xerox worldwide.

BrainPower was the 1988 recipient of the president's citation for private sector community initiatives. The organization's operating charter identifies five areas of business assistance to the schools and district. Each area is directly traceable to the Urban League's *Call to Action.* Rochester BrainPower

1. *Creates job opportunities.* Specifically, the organization provides career counseling and job placement to Rochester students as inducements for improved academic performance. Working through the nonprofit Rochester Jobs, Inc., BrainPower has placed job counselors in high schools to match students with available employment and has provided job seekers with readiness training.

2. *Develops school-business partnerships.* The business consortium has established more than 125 partnerships between Rochester businesses and the Rochester public schools.
3. *Opens corporate workshops to school personnel,* providing funds to Rochester's Teacher Center and persuading the University of Rochester to develop a Principals' Academy.
4. *Makes corporate consulting resources available,* offering to Rochester City Schools central office staff sessions on organizational dynamics as well as personnel and budgeting operations.
5. *Markets public education in Rochester.* Working in tandem with the Advertising Council of Rochester, BrainPower embarked on a nearly $2 million community campaign on behalf of the city's public schools. Community billboards and local public service announcements proclaimed, "Help a Teacher Help Your Child" "Stay in School, You're Too Good to Lose" and "Growing Up: With Education, Anything is Possible."

Says the organization's Howard Mills, "Business wants to take the long view." Nonetheless, corporate leaders remain cautious. "The question is raised each year," says Mills, 'How long will BrainPower last?' The answer always comes back, 'Let's keep it going another year.'"[45]

Rochester's corporate community, in many ways, has adopted an activist stance vis-à-vis school reform. Kodak and Xerox, two homegrown Rochester corporations, are major players in the national, as well as the local, education policy arena. Rochester BrainPower is a visible example of business involvement in school affairs.

There remains, however, a nagging sense that the Rochester business community does not quite "get it." Corporate leaders assert the need for a new kind of work force, capable of handling high technology and competent to work in reorganized industries.. Yet there is little "on-the-ground" realization of just how drastic, and how complicated, the changes in schooling need to be.

The Second Contract

The 1990–92 contract continues Rochester's education reform agenda. The agreement expands Home Base Guidance to the high schools, strengthens School-Based Planning, and enhances the Career in Teaching program.

The preamble to the pact extends the notion of mutual district-union beyond-collective-bargaining obligations, and includes an explicit statement of extended professional expectations for teachers:

> The RTA and the City School District believe that fundamental to educational reform is delineating extended expectations for all professional staff. The parties are dedicated to undertake the purposeful change necessary to restructure schools. A commitment to change means a willingness to reconsider and alter, as necessary, traditional relationships, organizational structures, and allocations of personnel, resources, time and space to advance student achievement and enhance the life of the school as a center of learning and productivity. The first professional commitment must be to advance student achievement.[46]

Rochester's second reform contract was not easily achieved. There actually were three "second contracts." The first one was

rejected by teachers in September 1990. The second version, approved by teachers, was rejected by Rochester's school board in January 1991. Finally, a contract acceptable both to the board and teachers was reached in May 1991. The central issue was accountability.

The Issue of Accountability

The contract negotiated in 1987 expired June 30, 1990. Before then, contract talks were initiated between the school district and the RTA to reach a successor accord. The union and the district decided that the centerpiece of the new contract would be "accountability." Specifically, the agreement would be used as the vehicle for crafting educational policy to determine who is accountable to whom and for what, for deciding what students should know and be able to do at reasonable intervals, how student progress appropriately can be measured, and what might be reasonable incentives and disincentives to promote enhanced student achievement.

To lay a foundation for the contractual agreement, the superintendent and union president jointly hosted a series of forums for parents, teachers, and Rochester school administrators. The forums were designed to promote public conversations about the nature of educational accountability.

The district and the teachers' union also jointly appointed a Task Force on Shared Accountability for Improved Student Learning. Co-chaired by Peter McWalters and Adam Urbanski, the purpose of the task force was to develop a school-based appraisal system "to ensure responsible and responsive [professional] practices that are

knowledge-based and client-oriented"[47] and to make recommendations to the district and union bargaining teams.

The task force was comprised of district teachers and administrators, and was facilitated by Sonia Hernandez of the Rochester-based National Center on Education and the Economy. The task force report, issued in August 1991, focused accountability squarely on student performance: "We must shift the focus from mere adherence to certain procedures and directives to measuring our success primarily in terms of improved student achievement."[48]

The report recommended that achievement be gauged on the basis of "authentic assessment" measures of what students should know and be able to do. Among the instructional areas to be assessed would be communication, numeracy, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, multiculturality, teamwork, and use of technology.

The task force also recommended a set of requisite "enabling conditions." These included smaller school units, reduced class sizes, extended instructional time for students who require it, expansion of early childhood education programs, greater investment in staff development, expansion of school-based decision-making (that is, greater discretion over factors that affect student learning), and support for school administrators.

The task force report differentiated between shared accountability and individual teacher accountability. Shared accountability would commit central office to act as a service center to schools, business to require school transcripts of new hires,

students to assume greater responsibility for their own learning, and parents to maintain closer contact with the school.

Individual teacher accountability would encompass a Professional Code of Practice for teachers, based on criteria articulated by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. A new teacher evaluation system emphasizing peer review and assessment based on a structured professional portfolio would be developed, and salary increases could be withheld from teachers required to participate in the Intervention component of the Career in Teaching Program.

The First Second Contract

Tentative agreement on a new contract between the union and district was reached in September 1990. Included in this tentative agreement was a new provision on professional accountability, patterned after the recommendations of the Task Force on Shared Accountability for Student Learning.

Under the provisions of the tentative agreement, salary advancement for Rochester teachers would be determined by a Professional Practice Review Committee (PPRC) comprised of two teachers selected by the union and an administrator chosen by the district. Teachers would submit to the PPRC professional portfolios, which might include supervisors' evaluations, examples of student work, results of peer reviews, and evidence of professional growth and community involvement.

The PPRC would have the responsibility to "affirm a rating"[49] at one of three levels: (1) "meets or exceeds high professional standards," (2) "must improve to meet high professional standards,"

or (3) "unsatisfactory." Teachers achieving the first rating would receive a salary increase of 11 percent in the first year of the contract. Teachers in Category 2, "must improve," would be eligible for a cost-of-living increase equal to approximately 4.2 percent in 1990–91. Those teachers rated "unsatisfactory" would receive no salary adjustment. Ratings were to be determined on the basis of a set of professional expectations for teachers, developed by the district's Career in 'Teaching panel.

In a letter to AFT president Albert Shanker, Adam Urbanski explained the rationale for the proposed new system:

> We viewed this as an opportunity to gain control over our profession. The proposal outlined a new evaluation system that would substantially diminish the importance of the administrators' checklist "inspection" of teachers' work and replace it with a diversified professional assessment.[50]

The school board was scheduled to vote on the contract before teachers voted. Prior to board action, details of the proposed pact were leaked. As Ann Bradley described in an article in Education Week, "From the Urban League of Rochester to the editorial boards of the city's two daily newspapers[51] to the office of Mayor Thomas P. Ryan, skepticism greeted the announcement of the new contract."[52]

Although it was not possible to pinpoint the precise price tag of the new accord—teachers had not yet been placed in categories and awarded commensurate salary increases—vocal members of the Rochester community urged the board to reject the settlement as too costly. William Johnson, president of Rochester's Urban League,

vehemently denounced the new pact. Johnson proclaimed that teachers had been "paid in advance" in the first contract in anticipation of substantial reform. The evidence of change, said Johnson, was insufficient to warrant additional salary increases.

The board approved the agreement on a split 4 to 3 vote. Bill Johnson labeled the board vote "a catastrophe of the highest order. This is comparable to the savings and loan scandal. This is a ripoff of public money."[53]

The Teachers' Turn

The RTA executive board unanimously approved the tentative agreement and recommended it to the union's policy-making body, the Representative Assembly. The 150-member assembly overwhelmingly endorsed the proposed contract and urged teachers to ratify it.

But before teachers had an opportunity to vote on the contract, the superintendent was quoted in the press as saying that teachers would need to work hard to reach the "excellent" category and that he expected very few would be assigned that ranking initially. Board members were quoted as saying they expected a "normal bell curve,"[54] with most teachers in the second, or "must improve," pay category.

By the time teachers met on September 24, 1990 to vote on the contract, the controversial professional accountability section had been labeled "pay for performance." The term had taken on a malign life of its own, and the negative rhetoric surrounding controversial, and usually ill-fated, merit pay plans had thus attached itself to the proposed contract.

Finally—and unfortunately—union officials organized the contract ratification meeting in such a way that teachers were allowed to cast their ballots before union officials could explain the agreement. By a vote of 849–774, Rochester teachers rejected the contract recommended to them by their union leadership. A thousand teachers chose not to vote at all. For the first time in New York labor relations history, a school board had voted to approve a contract and teachers had rejected it.

"I Was Wrong," says Urbanski

Rochester teachers' repudiation of the contract struck a blow to RTA president Urbanski. Immediately after the contract was defeated by his membership, Urbanski considered resigning as union president. But he was flooded with expressions of good will from teachers. More than five hundred letters of support arrived at his office, urging him to stay on. Urbanski says, "I took a straight right to the chin but didn't stay down for the count."[55] When, some weeks later, Urbanski announced to the union's Representative Assembly that he would continue as RTA president, the union leader received a standing ovation.

Adam Urbanski did not characterize teachers' defeat of the September 1990 contract as a rejection of reform. Neither did he take the contract vote lightly. District officials claim teachers would have accepted the contract if only they had understood it better. Urbanski disagrees.

"Teachers said no to this contract."[56] he says. "The [union] is a democracy. [Teachers] elect me to make decisions. [They] tell me if

they are good or bad. [They] told me."[57] About the contract, the RTA leader says simply, "I was wrong."[58]

The Second Second Contract

For a month following teachers' rejection of the September 1990 agreement, the superintendent and school board demanded that the RTA president take the defeated pact back to his members for a second vote. Urbanski steadfastly refused. Finally, the parties returned to the bargaining table. Two education experts, Linda Darling-Hammond of Columbia University, and Lee Schulman from Stanford University, were brought in to assist, Darling-Hammond to frame the issue of professional accountability, Schulman to shape the evaluation system.

In December 1990, as renewed negotiations on a new contract continued, Rochester's school board extended the superintendent's' contract by three years. According to the board, this action was designed to send the message, "reform isn't going away."[59]

Another proposed contract was achieved in January 1991. This time, teachers were scheduled to vote before the board took action. The new agreement contained a modified professional accountability plan, one described by district counsel Kaufman as "more user friendly."[60] A new component, Remediation, was added to the Career in Teaching program. The CIT panel would be empowered to review teacher evaluations, design remediation programs for teachers in trouble, and impose "full or partial salary withhold[ing] during the period of remediation."[61] Teachers would earn approximately 9 percent more for each year of the two-year pact.

By a 97 percent margin, Rochester teachers ratified the agreement on January 16, 1991, voting 2,375–75 in favor of the new accord. Now it was the board's turn.

By this time, there was widespread public knowledge of the New York state budget crisis. Gannett editorials urged the board to reject the contract. In the center of a January 13 editorial titled, "Say 'No' to This Contract," the newspaper printed the names and home telephone numbers of the seven school board members and urged community members to follow the newspaper's lead.

In an unprecedented action, Rochester's school board held a public hearing on the proposed pact. Teachers urged the board to approve the contract. The community took the opposite position, arguing that the agreement was too expensive. Moreover, said the community, "We paid for reform in 1987. We do not choose to pay again."

The board unanimously rejected the contract. Board members said they cast negative votes because the contract was too expensive. Urbanski said, "They chose to do what was politically safe to do."[62]

On the day following the board vote, a Gannett editorial praised the elected officials' action and mildly scolded the district's disgruntled teachers: "Teachers haven't been singled out. They are part of the community. They shared in the prosperity of the late 1980s with big raises three years ago; now as the community tightens its belt, so too must teachers."[63]

Negotiations Again

The parties did not return directly to the bargaining table. Rather, there ensued a brief exchange of letters between the union

and the district. The union proposed a one-year "cooling off" period in the form of a single-year contract. The district countered with a proposed two-year agreement. The union suggested a modified two-year pact.

Adam Urbanski, meanwhile, came under internal union pressure to "take accountability off the table," but consistently refused to do so. Some teachers—Urbanski says without "formal" union sanction—"worked to rule," performing only those professional obligations specifically delineated in the contract. Tension mounted.

In a curious turn of events, the four male board members paid a visit to union president Urbanski in early February 1991. The meeting was unofficial, off-the-record, and conversational. The three women board members were not invited to the meeting, and were angry when they discovered their colleagues' activity, attributing it to "the old boys being at it again."

What was accomplished by the meeting? Says board member Frank Willis, "Adam helped us understand we could settle this thing."[64] The superintendent and the distrcit's chief negotiator both had assured the board a contract settlement was possible, but the board majority seemed to need to hear the message from the mouth of the union president.

Despite agreement that a settlement was within reach, both sides knew that contract rejections had damaged their credibility. The union and the district jointly sought the assistance of an outside neutral third party, the New York State Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), which formally declared that an impasse existed in

Rochester negotiations. On February 26, 1991, PERB appointed a tri-partite factfinding panel, which scheduled a hearing for March 23.

Unresolved issues submitted for fact-finding were (1) teacher accountability, (2) community involvement, and (3) teacher salaries. After taking testimony from district and union officials as well as from Rochester citizens, and deliberating on the issues, the factfinding panel issued its report. The panel recommended that the union and the school district create a task force to develop a new teacher performance appraisal system, that "opportunities be created for parent/community input into the discussion and development of performance appraisal design criteria,"[65] and that teachers receive a 7 percent salary increase.

One intriguing aspect of the fact-finding report was its language. Most reports of this nature are relatively dry, written in quasi-legal language with few rhetorical ruffles and flourishes. But Rochester's fact-finding report gave a gracious nod to union-district reform efforts: "The Rochester Teachers Association and Rochester City School District have moved farther along the path of professional accountability than any other major school system, thereby receiving deserved plaudits as well as intense scrutiny."[66] Another section of the report acknowledged, "Rochester is in the forefront of educational reform, addressing difficult issues which are avoided in many urban communities."[67]

Once more, the parties returned to the bargaining table, now under a news blackout imposed by PERB. Finally, a new contract emerged. Approved unanimously by the school board and overwhelmingly by teachers, the 1990–92 accord incorporates most

of the fact-finders' recommendations. Teachers receive salary increases of approximately 7 percent for each year of the contract, a new accountability task force under the auspices of the CIT panel was been established, and the CIT panel was empowered to withhold raises for teachers who are rated "unsatisfactory." Despite false starts and setbacks, the new contract, say McWalters and Urbanski, "protects the [reform] agenda."[68]

The Challenge of Rising Expectations

The good news is that education reform in Rochester is being swept along on a tide of rising expectations. The bad news is that education reform in Rochester is being swept along on a tide of rising expectations.

When the 1987 teachers' contract first was publicly announced, a leader of Rochester's legislative delegation who had helped to win additional state funds for the district's education reform programs said, "The [union and the district] are really going to have to demonstrate results."[69] Added a colleague, "And the sooner the better."[70]

In the same vein, shortly after the 1987 contract was ratified, Rochester's Democrat and Chronicle wrote, in what might have been construed as a warning, a threat, or a challenge, "The education reformers have promised improvements all along. Now they had better deliver."[71]

When tests scores in the early elementary grades posted a slight improvement in 1988,[72] Peter McWalters and Adam Urbanski

wished aloud that it had not happened, and cautioned against attributing these small increases to just-initiated reform efforts.

And Rochester journalist Desmond Stone, in a 1988 report to the Center for Educational Development, warned, "There's evidence that the Rochester community does not fully grasp the immensity of the task it has set for itself. What is implicit in changing the way we educate our children is a wholesale top-to-bottom reordering of society's priorities."[73] Stone's warning went relatively unheeded.

US News and World Report, in June 1989, just seventeen months after the contract had taken effect, published a "report card" on Rochester. The journalists reduced reform efforts to discrete, "gradable" program elements. School-based planning rated a *B* on the magazine's score card, teacher-student relationships a *C*, business community involvement in education reform was given a *C+*, linking schools with area colleges rated a *C*, as did new instructional programs, and success in cutting the bureaucracy. Overall, the magazine gave Rochester reform efforts a grade of *C*, or just average.[74]

By 1990, the third year of the contract, nearly half of the Rochester citizens polled about school reform reported they wanted more—and faster—evidence of educational improvement.[75] The Urban League's Bill Johnson said it was time to "call the question" on reform.

Research studies have shown that change of the magnitude contemplated in Rochester requires years of sustained effort before significant results are shown. Yet the eagerness for improvement and the implicit promises inherent in the reforms militate against

patient waiting for results. Peter McWalters laments, "Everybody's asking, 'How's it going? Is it over yet?'"[76]

Adam Urbanski acknowledges that the pace of change is slow and deliberate, but expresses frustration with critics such as Johnson. "How long has the Urban League been working against inner city poverty? Twenty years? Have [they] fixed it yet?,"[77] he asks pointedly.

Contract rejections and community reaction to the proposed pacts have had a sobering effect on Rochester reformers. The school board particularly has been affected. Says board member Archie Curry, "We made the expectations too high, we did not explain that change takes time, we did not celebrate our successes. We did not talk enough about reform *after* the contract."[78]

"When teachers rejected the [September 1990] contract, a crack appeared in the wall," says board member Rachael Hedding. "We had the public with us only superficially. Our only real power base was public opinion, [but] we did not solidify parental support."[79]

Other board members worry that Rochester is trying too hard to be all things to all people. Board member Mike Fernandez: "The laundry list [of all possible reforms] could become our strategic agenda."[80]

Rochester remains in many ways a captive of its own publicity. Peter McWalters says, "Adam [Urbanski] and I have been to national conferences with people who ought to know better, and have been introduced as two folks from Rochester with a changed school system. They've made it accountable and teachers are empowered. We both look at each other and think, 'That's not where I work.'"[81]

The Changing Shape of Labor Relations in Rochester

Conflict over the second contract did not mean labor relations war in Rochester. Board president Spoto says, "Yes, contracts were rejected. But we always knew we could put it together.[82]

Rochester is attempting to craft a new nexus between labor-management relations and school reform. The district and the union together are redefining the parameters of collective bargaining and the purpose of the contract.

"The only way we're going to affect the kind of change we want to put in place," says Kathy Spoto, "is through collective bargaining. The contract is part of our strategic education plan. It [the contract] is an investment which moves the [reform] agenda forward."[83]

The contract in Rochester is being employed as an explicit tool of education policy and a vehicle for school reform. The collective bargaining agreement, say union and district officials, is designed to serve as evidence that the community can expect teachers to engage in serious discussions about the teaching profession *specifically as it relates to student achievement.* "The contract," says RTA president Urbanski, "should be the floor, not the ceiling, for what teachers should be willing to do for students."[84]

The union and district are dealing consciously and publicly with "big ticket" items and consequential ideas—accountability, student outcomes, and the definition of competent teaching. They have assumed joint custody of reform and turned the tables on the conventional wisdom of issue ownership. "Much of the change," says Urbanski, "is in who is saying these things, not in what is being said.

[it's in] who owns what piece [of the reform agenda]."[85] That the teachers' union actively pursues an outcome-oriented accountability system as the focus of its collective bargaining agreement is evidence of change.

Credit for the changing face of labor relations owes much to the strong bond between Peter McWalters and Adam Urbanski. The superintendent of schools and the RTA president are "intellectual soul mates" who share a common vision for schools. Legal counsel Kaufman says, perhaps only half jokingly, "Adam and Peter are dangerous when they're together."[86]

Urbanski and McWalters developed a solid foundation of trust and mutual respect that extends beyond traditionally defined professional roles. They describe each other as "educators who happen to be" "union leader" or "superintendent," fill in the appropriate blank.

Their language also gives evidence of their partnership. When the school board rejected the tentative agreement teachers ratified in January 1991, RTA president Urbanski said, "I am most disappointed that the board of education cast their [sic] vote against the teachers, *against the superintendent of schools,* against labor-management cooperation, and against continued reforms"[87] [emphasis added]. And superintendent McWalters said of the proposed agreement, "I am not ashamed of the tentative agreement that I have reached *with a colleague*"[88] [emphasis added]. The "colleague" in this instance was the president of the teachers' union, a superintendent's traditional adversary.

Yet this is also a pragmatic partnership. Says Urbanski, "[Our relationship] long since ceased being a matter of choice. It's a matter of necessity. The big question now is, Can we afford to get into a fight? If either of us fail, then we are mutually dead."[89]

Labor relations in Rochester is no longer a zero-sum game in which there are victors and vanquished. The collectively bargained contract has become the principal vehicle for education reform. Labor-management cooperation is the strategy of choice to maintain the momentum for change. "We don't play the same game anymore,"[90] says the union's Urbanski.

Unanswered Questions, Unresolved Issues

By conventional objective measures, there have been "gains" in Rochester since the onset of reform efforts. Superintendent McWalters, in October 1990, announced that more elementary students are being promoted to the next grade, fewer elementary students are enrolled in special education classes, and elementary students' performance in reading and mathematics is up. More eighth-graders are passing their English, mathematics, science, and social studies classes. In addition, more students are enrolled in New York State Regents courses, more students (and increased numbers of minority students) are taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test, fewer students are receiving long-term suspensions, and more home contacts are being made by school staffs.

Moreover, district and union leadership say they remain committed to the education reform agenda. And there are conscious efforts to infuse reform into multiple aspects of district business.

Peter McWalters, for example, presented his 1991–92 budget in terms of "the agenda" of reform."

Yet Rochester remains a district simultaneously full of promise and problems. Unanswered questions focus principally on issues of leadership and support.

Since school change began in Rochester, some reform watchers have asked whether the impetus for change was being propelled only by the personalities of Peter McWalters and Adam Urbanski. "If either McWalters or Urbanski ceased to be part of the reform equation," they wondered, "would reform efforts now underway continue?"

In January 1992, Peter McWalters left his position as superintendent in Rochester to assume new duties as chief state school officer in Rhode Island. Manuel Rivera, a Rochester school district "insider," was appointed superintendent.

Will the new superintendent feel compelled to break free of the policies of his predecessor, make his own mark on the district by changing the direction of reform and, in so doing, alter the compact with the union? Alternatively, might Rivera welcome a partnership with the teachers union and succeed where McWalters could not in bringing district administrators into the reform fold? Time and political circumstances will write the next chapter of labor relations in Rochester.

Maintaining reform momentum and achieving forward progress is, at least in part, a process of balancing supportive and competing interests. Some Rochester parents now are saying, "You are experimenting on our kids. Just give us what the white kids in

the suburbs get." Will Rochester residents, frustrated with the pace of reform, create a backlash, demanding an end to school change efforts? Currently, the community is vocal, but not well organized. Nonetheless, how long the Rochester community will wait, patiently or not, for reform results is an open question.

Circling around community concerns is the issue of teacher salaries. Teachers have received regular, and hefty, salary increases. Yet little money has been sequestered for program advances. The purposes for which school district money is allocated have become a "big ticket" item in Rochester politics. Repercussions could follow.

Salaries aside, can teacher commitment to change be expanded? Reform in Rochester has been "top down," albeit with heavy union involvement. Change efforts have "bubbled up" only minimally from the schools and classrooms. Union and district officials have placed many of their hopes for school-initiated innovation in the school-based planning process.

But school-based planning in Rochester is a game with few rules. This is an intentional strategy. McWalters and Urbanski determined to "let schools go and see where it would take them." At present, school-based planning, with its emphasis on student outcomes, looks good on paper, but seems shaky in operation. Few schools are following the lead of School 6 and making substantial changes. It simply is not clear that teachers (or administrators) have the same appetite for risk and tolerance for ambiguity as do their leaders.

Then there is the issue of business support. School board members acknowledge that business has "backed away" from intense

involvement with the district. McWalters says, "When we were twisting, no one [in the business community] spoke up for us."[91] Board president Kathy Spoto suggests that business leaders are not using their considerable clout to leverage dollars for schools, but instead are lobbying to keep their taxes down. Will longterm business support wane now that reform results seem longer in coming? And if business withdraws, what practical impact, if any, will that have on district and union education change efforts?

None of these questions has an easy answer. Yet in a sense, Rochester is providing a laboratory within which to seek answers to questions such as these, and others.

What is clear is that Rochester City Schools has, for the present, weathered some severe storms with its reform agenda and collegial labor management relations intact. The district and the union will surely continue to avoid oversimple solutions to complex problems, and there undoubtedly will be more rough seas in Rochester's education future. Change is likely to continue to be slow and arduous. Say Peter McWalters and Adam Urbanski, "Those who wanted [Rochester] to fail or [to] be a shining point of light will just have to wait a little longer."[92]

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[1] This case study was written as a part of Project VISION of the Claremont Graduate School.
[2] "Why Al Shanker Wants a Revolution in the Classroom," *Democrat and Chronicle*, January 17, 1988.
[3] See Harold Hodgkinson, *The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and the Service Delivery System*, Washington, D.C.: Institutie for Educational Leadership, 1989.
[4] National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*, Washington, D.C.: U.S.Department of Education, 1983.
[5] McWalters interview, May 30, 1990.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Urbanski interview, May 30, 1990.
[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Mary Ann Towler, "Great Expectations: Reforming the Schools," *Times-Union*, September 21, 1989.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Lila N. Carol, Jacqueline Danzberger, Barbara McCloud, and others, *School Boards: Strengthening Grass Roots Leadership*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986.
[18] Spoto interview, May 30, 1990
[19] *A Call to Action*, Rochester Urban League, March 6, 1986, p. 1.
[20] Ibid., p.3.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p. 7.
[23] Ibid., p. 30.
[24] Ibid., p. 31.
[25] Contractual Agreement Between the City School District of Rochester, New York and the Rochester Teachers Association (NYSUT/AFT-AFL/CIO), July 1, 1987–June 30, 1990.
[26] *The Condition of Teaching: A State-by-State Analysis, 1988*, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988, p. 10.
[27] Adam Urbanski, "The Rochester Contract: A Status Report," *Educational Leadership*, November 1988, p. 50.
[28] Contractual agreement, op. cit.
[29] Joanne Sculley interview, May 30, 1990.
[30] *Questions and Answers About School-Based Planning 1988–89*, Rochester City Schools.
[31] *Guidelines for School-Based Planning 1988–89*, Rochester City School District.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] McWalters, op. cit.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] The 1990 contract would extend Home Base Guidance to the high schools.
[38] *The Home Base Guidance Program in Rochester City School District Middle Schools*, Rochester City Schools, October 1988.
[39] Richard Stear interview, May 29, 1990.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Tom Gillett interview, May 30, 1990.
[43] David Kearns left his Xerox position in 1991 when he was appointed Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Education.
[44] Howard Mills interview, May 29, 1990.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Contractual agreement between the Rochester Teachers Association (NYSUT/AFT AFL-CIO) and the City School District, May 1991.
[47] Statement by Linda Darling-Hammond to the Task Force on Shared Accountability for Improved Student Learning, August 13, 1990.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Tentative agreement between the Rochester Teachers Association and the City School District, September 24, 1990.
[50] Letter from Adam Urbanski to Albert Shanker, November 5, 1990.

[51] Rochester publishes two newspapers, the morning *Democrat and Chronicle*, and the afternoon *Times-Union*. However, both papers are owned by Gannett. They are published out of the same building—called the "paragraph factory" by local journalists. In 1990, the papers began publishing identical editorials.

[52] Ann Bradley, "In Rochester, Skepticism, Confusion Greet News of 'Revolutionary' Pact," *Education Week*, September 26, 1990.

[53] Bradley, op. cit.

[54] Kaufman, op. cit.

[55] Urbanski interview, November 14, 1990.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] At least one board member remained critical of the superintendent. Ben Douglas, who voted in favor of renewing the superintendent's contract, nevertheless wrote an editorial which ran in Rochester's *Democrat and Chronicle*. Douglas wrote, "City school superintendent Peter McWalters talks a lot about 'accountability' in the schools. But now that his contract has been renewed the community needs some serious discussion of his own [the superintendent's] accountability both for the day-to-day management of the schools and the agenda of reform."

[60] Kaufman, op. cit.

[61] Tentative agreement between the Rochester Teachers Association and the City School District, January 16, 1991.

[62] Robin Wilson-Glover, "Union: School Board Must Forfeit," *Times-Union*, January 25, 1991.

[63] "All Belts Must Tighten," *Democrat and Chronicle*, January 25, 1991.

[64] Frank Willis interview, April 30, 1991.

[65] Factfinding Report and Recommendations in the Matter of Impasse Between Rochester Teachers Association and Rochester City School District, March 1990.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Joint interview, Peter McWalters and Adam Urbanski, April 30, 1991.

[69] Towler, op. cit.

[70] Ibid.

[71] "Now the Hard Part, Earning the $45,000," *Democrat and Chronicle*, August 23, 1987.

[72] Robin Wilson-Glover, "Elementary Scores Give New Hope for District," *Times-Union*, October 25, 1988.

[73] Desmond Stone, *Continued Commitment: The Call to Action Three Years Later*, Rochester: Center for Educational Development, 1988, p. 18.

[74] "The Hard Lessons of School Reform," *US News and World Report*, June 26, 1989.

[75] Stephanie Reid, "48% Want Good Students Now," *Democrat and Chronicle*, February 1, 1990.

[76] McWalters interview, May 30, 1990.

[77] Urbanski interview, May 30, 1990.

[78] Archie Curry interview, May 30, 1991.

[79] Rachael Hedding interview, May 30, 1991.

[80] Michael Fernandez interview, May 1, 1991.

[81] McWalters, May 30, 1990, op. cit.

[82] Spoto, op.cit.

[83] Catherine Spoto interview, April 29, 1991.

[84] Urbanski interview, May 31, 1990.

[85] Urbanski interview, May 31, 1990.

[86] Kaufman, op. cit.

[87] Stephanie Reid, "City School Board Rejects Teachers' Contract 7–0," *Democrat and Chronicle*, January 24, 1991.

[88] Robin Wilson-Glover, "City Teacher OK Pact, Urge Board to Do the Same," *Times-Union*, January 18, 1991.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Urbanski, op. cit.
[91] Joint interview, op. cit.
[92] Joint interview, op. cit.